

## THROWN into the **SPOTLIGHT**

B6-B7



### **VOLLEYBALL** B11

"Our expectations are that we're going to make a push to be in that upper echelon of the conference. We're also expecting to make a return trip to the NCAA tournament."

Jessica Rinehart





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# Bearcats look to bounce back

By Chris Schoonover  
Chief Sports Reporter

Depth will be the key to a successful season for the Bearcat soccer team, head coach Tracy Hoza said. The 'Cats graduated seven players from last year's squad (3-10-5, MIAA 3-9-4), but brought in plenty of freshmen and transfers to this year's team. "Last year we lost significant numbers, however this year we have brought in significant numbers and quality players," Hoza said. "The freshmen from last year have been great leaders and have blended everybody together." The Bearcats are predicted to finish sixth in MIAA Preseason Coaches Poll.

"Because (soccer) is the best sport in the world for a reason."

Tracy Hoza

"Honestly, that is correct going off last year," Hoza said. "But I think this year we will go out, contend, and surprise some people." Sophomore defender Jordan Albright returns to the team looking to make a big impact. "She is a competitor," Hoza said. "She definitely brings back the defend with pride, attack with passion mentality."



FILE PHOTO | NWMISSOURIAN

Sophomore midfielder Anna Calgaard passes to a teammate in a 3-1 loss to Nebraska-Omaha last season.

Senior midfielder Hannah Silvey also returns to the squad as a leader up front. "(Silvey) had a very good spring and has realized that hard work will pay off," Hoza said. Freshman Fiona Moloney joins the Bearcat squad from Ireland and is expected to make an

immediate impact anywhere on the pitch. "She can go upfront, out wide, or anywhere we need her," Hoza said. Hoza expects more than just wins for this team this year. "On a note you cannot measure, we want to see better soccer,"

Hoza said. "Because it is the best sport in the world for a reason." The 'Cats begin the season at 5 p.m. Sept. 2 against Texas A&M-Commerce at Bearcat Pitch. Conference play begins at 4 p.m. Sept. 15 in Kirksville, Mo. against Truman State.

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|          |                                      |         |
|----------|--------------------------------------|---------|
| Sept. 1  | at Truman*                           | 7:30 pm |
| Sept. 10 | Sioux Falls                          | 6 pm    |
| Sept. 17 | at Lincoln*                          | 2 pm    |
| Sept. 24 | Fort Hays State* (Family Weekend)    | 1 pm    |
| Oct. 1   | vs. Pittsburg State (Fall Classic X) | 2 pm    |
| Oct. 8   | at Central Missouri*                 | 1:30 pm |
| Oct. 15  | Eastern New Mexico                   | 1 pm    |
| Oct. 22  | Washburn* (Homecoming)               | 2 pm    |
| Oct. 29  | at Missouri Southern*                | 2 pm    |
| Nov. 5   | at Missouri Western*                 | 1:30 pm |
| Nov. 12  | Emporia State*                       | 1 pm    |
| Nov. 19  | NCAA First Round                     | TBA     |
| Nov. 26  | NCAA Second Round                    | TBA     |
| Dec. 3   | NCAA Quarterfinals                   | TBA     |
| Dec. 10  | NCAA Semifinals                      | TBA     |
| Dec. 17  | NCAA Championship - Florence, Ala.   | TBA     |

\*=MIAA Competition

Date X = Home Game

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## MARYVILLE HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

| DATE     | TIME    | OPPONENT           | LOCATION |
|----------|---------|--------------------|----------|
| 8/26/11  | 7:00 pm | Lawson             | Home     |
| 9/2/11   | 7:00 pm | Smithville (Conf)  | Away     |
| 9/10/11  | 1:00 pm | McCluer            | Away     |
| 9/16/11  | 7:00 pm | Lafayette (Conf)   | Home     |
| 9/23/11  | 7:00 pm | LeBlond (Conf)     | Home     |
| 9/30/11  | 7:00 pm | Benton (Conf)      | Away     |
| 10/7/11  | 7:00 pm | Savannah (Conf)    | Away     |
| 10/14/11 | 7:00 pm | Chillicothe (Conf) | Home     |
| 10/21/11 | 7:00 pm | St. Pius X         | Away     |
| 10/27/11 | 7:00 pm | Cameron (Conf)     | Home     |
| 11/2/11  | 7:00 pm | Regionals          | TBA      |
| 11/12/11 |         | Quarterfinals      | TBA      |
| 11/19/11 |         | SemiFinals         | TBA      |
| 11/25/11 |         | State Chamionship  | TBA      |

## MARYVILLE HIGH SCHOOL GIRL'S TENNIS

| DATE     | TIME    | OPPONENT           | LOCATION |
|----------|---------|--------------------|----------|
| 8/29/11  | 4:00 pm | Chillicothe (Conf) | Away     |
| 9/1/11   | 4:00 pm | Lafayette          | Home     |
| 9/6/11   | 4:00 pm | Savannah           | Away     |
| 9/8/11   | 4:00 pm | LeBlond            | Away     |
| 9/9/11   | 9:00 am | Benton Tournament  | Away     |
| 9/12/11  | 4:00 pm | Benton             | Away     |
| 9/14/11  | 8:00 am | Cameron Tournament | Away     |
| 9/15/11  | 4:00 pm | Lafayette (Conf)   | Away     |
| 9/20/11  | 4:00 pm | Savannah (Conf)    | Home     |
| 9/22/11  | 4:00 pm | Cameron (Conf)     | Home     |
| 9/26/11  | 4:00 pm | LeBlond (Conf)     | Home     |
| 9/28/11  | 8:30 am | MEC at Noyes       | Away     |
| 9/29/11  | 4:00 pm | Benton (Conf)      | Home     |
| 10/3/11  | 8:30 am | Districts          | Away     |
| 11/8/11  |         | Quarterfinals      | Away     |
| 11/11/11 |         | State              | Away     |

## MARYVILLE HIGH SCHOOL BOYS' SOCCER

| DATE         | TIME     | OPPONENT               | LOCATION |
|--------------|----------|------------------------|----------|
| 8/30,1, 3/11 |          | Barstow Tournament     | Away     |
| 9/6/11       | 4:00 pm  | Benton                 | Home     |
| 9/8,10/11    |          | Ex. Springs Tournament | Away     |
| 9/13/11      | 5:00 pm  | Smithville (Conf)      | Away     |
| 9/15/11      | 4:00 pm  | Maur Hill              | Home     |
| 9/19/11      | 4:00 pm  | Cameron                | Away     |
| 9/20/11      | 4:00 pm  | Chillicothe            | Away     |
| 9/22/11      | 4:00 pm  | Savannah               | Home     |
| 9/23, 24/11  | 14:30 pm | Kansas City Showcase   | Away     |
| 9/26/11      | 5:00 pm  | Lafayette              | Away     |
| 9/29/11      | 5:00 pm  | LeBlond (Conf)         | Away     |
| 10/3/11      | 5:00 pm  | Benton (Conf)          | Away     |
| 10/6/11      | 4:00 pm  | Cameron (Conf)         | Home     |
| 10/11/11     | 4:00 pm  | KC Northeast           | Home     |
| 10/13/11     | 4:00 pm  | Kansas City East       | Away     |
| 10/17/11     | 4:00 pm  | LeBlond                | Home     |
| 10/18/11     | 4:00 pm  | Chillicothe (Conf)     | Home     |
| 10/20/11     | :00 pm   | Lafayette (Conf)       | Home     |
| 10/24/11     | 4:00 pm  | Savannah (Conf)        | Away     |



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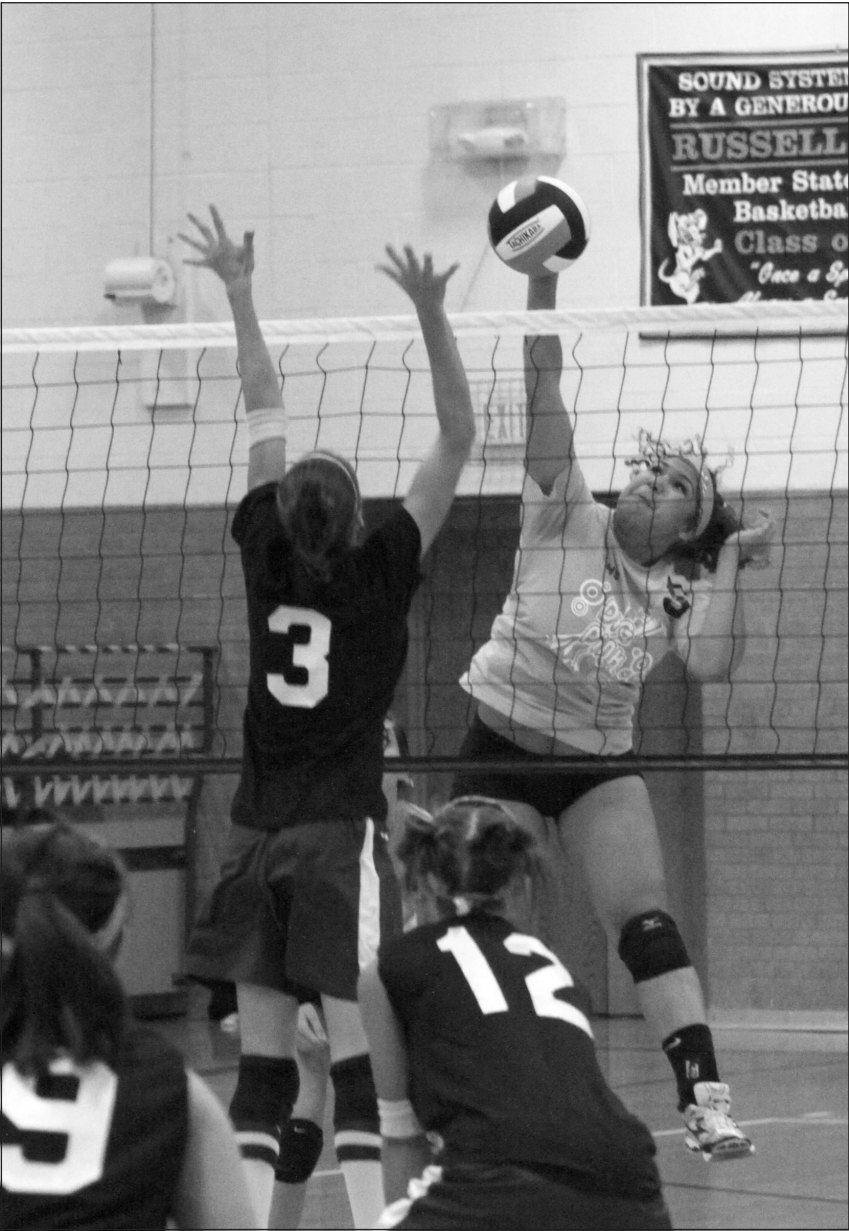
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# Experience driven Spoofhounds attack



FILE PHOTO | NWMISSOSURIAN  
Senior Kaylee Green spikes one over a Fairfax block last season. Green is one of six players returning with varsity experience.

By Chris Schoonover  
Chief Sports Reporter

The Spoofhound volleyball team returns a core group of players from last year's team and have high hopes for this season.

The 'Hounds lost three players off last year's squad, including All-State setter Rachel Tobin.

Head coach Lori Klaus has tabbed that junior Alyssa Stiens as Tobin's predecessor.

"She is a new setter, but she is doing very well," Klaus said.

The 'Hounds return six players with extensive varsity experience, including junior all-conference libero Jessa Stiens.

Klaus expects many different players to contribute throughout the squad.

"I think we are pretty consistent all-around," Klaus said.

The 'Hounds have built a good team camaraderie during the summer and want to use that during the season.

"They don't ever let each other get down," Klaus said. "They work really, really well together."

The team has also been fine tuning other aspects of their game during pre-season practices.

"We've been working on our weaknesses during practice, but I wouldn't consider them weaknesses anymore," Klaus said. "We have been working really hard on attacking and hitting the ball hard."

The Spoofhounds play in three tournaments this season and plan to be in the championship in every one of them.

"We would like to place high in conference and are hoping to win districts this year," Klaus said. "We thought we should have been close last year and we weren't."

'Hounds open up conference play on at 5 p.m. Sept. 8 at Leblond High School with the last year's disappointing first-round district exit against Chillicothe still lingering.

"They don't like to lose which is always good," Klaus said.

"They don't ever let each other get down. They work really, really well together."

Lori Klaus



SETH COOK | NWMISSOSURIAN  
Junior Mikaila Wallace prepares to hurl a pitch in the 'Hounds' 16-1 victory over Savannah on Tuesday, Aug. 23.

## MARYVILLE HIGH SCHOOL SOFTBALL

| DATE    | TIME    | LOCATION |
|---------|---------|----------|
| 8/22/11 | 5:00 pm | away     |
| 8/23/11 | 5:00 pm | home     |
| 8/25/11 | 5:00 pm | home     |
| 8/30/11 | 5:00 pm | home     |
| 9/1/11  | 4:30 pm | away     |
| 9/3/11  | 9:30 am | away     |
| 9/6/11  | 4:30 pm | away     |
| 9/8/11  | 5:00 pm | home     |
| 9/13/11 | 5:00 pm | home     |
| 9/15/11 | 4:30 pm | away     |
| 9/19/11 | 5:00 pm | away     |
| 9/20/11 | 4:30 pm | away     |
| 9/22/11 | 4:30 pm | away     |
| 9/24/11 | 9:00 am | away     |
| 9/29/11 | 5:00 pm | home     |

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# New-look Bearcats "All In" in 2011

By Jason Lawrence  
Sports Editor

The Bearcat football team is going to have a different look to it this year.

Northwest stalwarts Mel Tjeerdsma and Scott Bostwick will no longer be roaming the sidelines.

Tjeerdsma retired in December after 17 seasons at Northwest and Bostwick died June 5 from a heart attack.

"It's been challenging," new head coach Adam Dorrel said. "I'd be lying if I told you everything's been peachy. I didn't expect it to be. The one thing I've got to keep reminding myself is I can't be Mel, I can't be Scott."

Also gone are 16 starters from last season's team that went 12-2 (9-0 MIAA) and lost in the semifinals to

eventual national champion Minnesota-Duluth.

"When you have that many new faces, the continuity from a timing standpoint, from a communication standpoint, is not easy," Dorrel said. "That's the thing the casual observer doesn't understand. That thing doesn't come overnight. It takes a lot of reps, a lot of hard work, patience."

New to the mix are seven scholarship transfers, including four from former MIAA member Nebraska-Omaha, which cut its football program to move to Division I.

Junior wide receiver Brian Miller, sophomore running back James Franklin, sophomore offensive lineman John Becklun and redshirt freshman Jerry Key are all expected

to have an impact sometime this season after proving they can play in the MIAA while at UNO.

"It's just going to be different for each of them Sept. 1," Dorrel said. "I think some of them will really shine. I think others, it's going to be more as the season goes on."

Returning to the team however, are three senior first-team All-MIAA selections: wide receiver Jake Soy, linebacker Chad Kilgore and defensive lineman Josh Lorenzen. Junior running back Jordan Simmons was also elected to the first team as a kick and punt returner.

Even with the new feel to this team, everyone is "All In." Bostwick picked the slogan back in the fall, and Dorrel stuck with it after he was

named head coach.

"Basically it just means go all in with your conditioning from the summer, academics, your role as a team player, as a student athlete, in the community," Dorrel said. "It's not just football. Scott really hammered that to our kids this offseason. Being all in is more than just football."

Dorrel and the 'Cats get their first chance to strap on the pads and hit somebody in another uniform at 7:30 p.m. tonight in Kirksville, Mo., when they take on Truman State.

"I'm very excited," Dorrel said. "I love our kids. We've got great kids here and I'm really excited to watch them compete."

On the line is more than just the Ol' Hickory Stick.

Northwest is also looking to keep their MIAA-record streak of 46 straight conference wins alive while breaking a streak of four straight season-opening losses.

"We've always been very disappointed with our season openers since I've been here," Dorrel said. "So disappointed that way back in February we started addressing some reasons why we have performed poorly in our openers. We came up with a few reasons why we were doing that and addressed them in camp and changed some things up."

The 'Cats home opener is at 6 p.m. Sept. 10 versus Sioux Falls. Tjeerdsma and his wife Carol will be honored before the game. Northwest will also wear its new green Adidas uniforms for the first time.



SKYE PEPPER | NW MISSOURIAN

Junior linebacker Collin DeBuysere goes for the pick on a freshman Alex Taylor (left) pass.



SKYE PEPPER | NW MISSOURIAN

Redshirt freshman running back Denver Lohnes (left) hits the hole while freshman fullback Josh Swanson lays a block on senior cornerback Travis Manning.



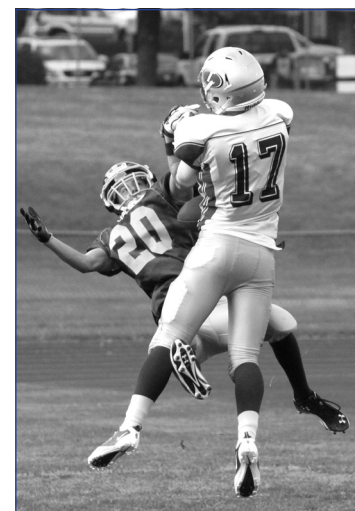


SETH COOK | NW MISSOURIAN

Senior fullback Nick Groumoutis eyes the endzone in the 'Hounds 48-0 victory over Lawson on Friday. The 'Hounds plan to lean heavily on their running game again this year.

"Our expectations here are to win championships."

Chris Holt



SETH COOK | NW MISSOURIAN

Senior safety Dakota Carmichael battles with a Lawson receiver for the jump ball. The 'Hounds hope to improve upon their 9-3 record from last season.

# Reloaded 'Hounds strive for title game

By Chris Schoonover

Chief Sports Reporter

The Spoofhounds enter the 2011 season with championship aspirations in their second year of Class 3 football.

The 'Hounds finished their 2010 season with a 9-3 record, including a last minute playoff defeat against eventual state champion, Richmond.

The 'Hounds lost a key group of seniors including All-State running back Gavin Talmadge and safety Will Twaddle.

"Anytime you lose seniors it's tough, but that's just part of it," head coach Chris Holt said. "You just have to have other kids step up."

The 'Hounds have no interest in rebuilding, but rather reloading with a talented group of players that were part of the 2009 state championship team.

"There is no reason to tell this team that they can't make it back to St. Louis because that's not fair," Holt said.

Junior quarterback Jonathan Baker has been hard at work all summer preparing

for his new starting role.

"I went to a lot of individual camps this summer and met up with a lot of college quarterbacks who taught me a few steps," Baker said.

Junior linebacker Jordan Zech also returns and is expected to take over in a big leadership role.

"I consider myself one of the leaders," Zech said. "I try to talk a lot when I'm on the field and keep everybody in line."

Another player expected to have a big year is wide receiver Tyler Walter.

"We are watching film, learning and helping each other out," Walter said. "Our confidence is high and hopefully it stays high."

Holt expects depth at various positions to be an early factor for the first few games as they continue to get into "football-shape."

"Our ones and twos, we feel like, can play on Friday nights," Holt said. "That should help us out in the beginning of the year when everybody isn't in as good shape."

The 'Hounds expect to

continue their winning ways through a mix of ground and pound offense and a hard-hitting defense.

"We like to run the football and we will run the football," Holt said. "It's a physical contest when you play us."

Holt and his players expect that with this group of players and their experience, anything less than a trip back to the state championship game is an underachieving season.

"That's where our program is," Holt said. "Our expectations here are to win championships."

# Experience bodes well for Spoofhounds

**By Jason Lawrence**  
Sports Editor

An early exit from last season's district tournament left a young Spoofhound soccer team longing for more.

Now, a more experienced team heads into the 2011 season looking to win the Midland Empire Conference and get past the district tournament.

"We're looking to get past the season this year and do something after Districts," head coach Stuart Collins said. "There's a lot of time between now and then to figure out what's going on.

"I think we're looking pretty good right now, so I'm pretty happy with it."

Gone are five seniors from last season's 15-8 team that finished second in the MEC at 6-1.

"The experience that the boys all had, bringing in some new people and getting them in the mix, I think that'll help us a lot," Collins said. "Obviously we're going to miss the guys that graduated, but that happens every year."

Four new seniors lead this year's squad: midfielders Ryan Vandivert and Shawn Scheffe, forward Calvin Talmadge and defender Chris Holtman.

Scheffe was named All-District and second team All-MEC. Vandivert and Talmadge were named All-MEC and second team All-District.

Collins expects the 'Hounds'



FILE PHOTO | NWMISSOSURIAN

Senior defender Chris Holtman chases down an errant kick during a match against Smithville last season. Head coach Stuart Collins expects Smithville to be a tough match-up this season

offense to be one of the strong points this year because the seniors "know what to do when they're up there," but would like to see his team work on keeping possession.

"We've got to work on our possession and make sure we can keep the ball so the other team doesn't have the chance to work

against us," Collins said.

Honorable mention All-MEC junior goalkeeper Michael Spencer and honorable mention defenders Holtman and junior Andrew Wiederholt anchor the defense, gaining valuable experience from extended playing time last season.

"It was incredible, we played a high level of soccer last year," Collins said. "For these guys to be at that level and consistently playing really helped us a lot."

Collins expects conference foe Smithville, as well as Pembroke Hill and Springfield Catholic to be some the 'Hounds' toughest

opponents this season, in addition to the Excelsior Springs Tournament.

Maryville opened the season Monday with the Barstow Tournament; a tournament the Spoofhounds won last season. The tournament continues today and Saturday.

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# Northwest Men's Tennis



FILE PHOTO | NWMISSOURIAN

Freshman Phillip Hultquist, returns the ball to Graceland University opponent last season during a match at the Frank Grube tennis courts.

# Experience, unity key for cross country in 2011

By Jason Lawrence  
Sports Editor

The Northwest men's and women's cross country teams open the season ranked in the top 10 in the region by the United States Track and Field Coaches and Cross Country Association.

The women are ranked No. 6 while the men begin the season at No. 7, but head coach Scott Lorek is expecting more from both teams this year after the men finished sixth last year and the women placed fifth in the region a year ago.

"I think that's probably pretty accurate," Lorek said. "Of course, we want to finish higher than that. Our goals are to be in the top three for both teams in the region."

The 'Cats return their whole men's roster, led by No. 1 runner, senior T.R. Pursell.

"The thing that I'm excited about on the men's side is we've got a lot of depth. We've got a lot of good freshmen. We've got everybody coming back from last year's team," Lorek said. "Honestly, I think for some other teams, if our men stay healthy, they're kind of scary because we've got everyone back and we've gotten better."

The women's team also returns its top runner, senior Angela Adams, but lacks the depth of the men's team.

"Our women's team does not have that kind of depth, but it's very good," Lorek said. "I think it's probably the most talent we've ever had, but again it's going to be staying healthy."

However, Lorek sees a lot of potential in his teams that feature just a combined seven seniors and thinks the unity both teams developed in camp will be key to their success.

"You always think about track and cross country as individual sports and I think our

group of athletes is really making it more of a team sport than a lot of teams do and I think that's going to be huge for us," Lorek said.

The 'Cats kick-off their season at 6 p.m., September 9 with the Bearcat Open.

"It's been a little frustrating getting teams here. I don't know what the deal is," Lorek said. "The course is too hard or something."

"We've got Peru State and William Jewell coming and that's who came last year, so it's a chance to get started. It's good to have a small meet to get started because after that, every meet is competitive."



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|-------------------------------|---------|-------------------|----------|
| DATE                          | TIME    | OPPONENT          | LOCATION |
| 9/14/11                       | 7:00 pm | Emporia State     | Away     |
| 9/20/11                       | 7:00 pm | Washburn          | Home     |
| 9/23/11                       | 7:00 pm | Fort Hays State   | Away     |
| 9/27/11                       | 7:00 pm | Rockhurst (MO)    | Home     |
| 10/7/11                       | 7:00 pm | Truman            | Home     |
| 10/12/11                      | 7:00 pm | Central Missouri  | Away     |
| 10/19/11                      | 7:00 pm | Pttsburg State    | Away     |
| 10/21/11                      | 7:00 pm | Southwest Baptist | Home     |
| 10/22/11                      | 6:00 pm | Missouri Southern | Away     |
| 10/25/11                      | 7:00 pm | Washburn          | Away     |
| 10/28/11                      | 7:00 pm | Fort Hays State   | Home     |
| 10/29/11                      | 3:00 pm | Emporia State     | Home     |
| 11/1/11                       | 7:00 pm | Missouri Western  | Home     |
| 11/4/11                       | 7:00 pm | Truman            | Away     |
| 11/5/11                       | 6:30 pm | Central Missouri  | Away     |
| 11/8/11                       | 7:00 pm | Pittsburg State   | Home     |
| 11/11/11                      | 7:00 pm | Southwest Baptist | Home     |
| 11/12/11                      | TBA     | Missouri Southern | Home     |

| NORTHWEST SOCCER SCHEDULE |          |                   |          |
|---------------------------|----------|-------------------|----------|
| DATE                      | TIME     | OPPONENT          | LOCATION |
| 9/2/11                    | 5:00 pm  | Texas A&M         | Home     |
| 9/4/11                    | 3:00 pm  | Wayne State       | Home     |
| 9/8/11                    | 7:00 pm  | Friends           | Away     |
| 9/10/11                   | 1:00 pm  | Newman            | Away     |
| 9/15/11                   | 4:00 pm  | Truman            | Away     |
| 9/17/11                   | 2:00 pm  | Southwest Baptist | Home     |
| 9/22/11                   | 4:00 pm  | Central MO        | Home     |
| 9/29/11                   | 3:00 pm  | MO Southern       | Home     |
| 10/4/11                   | 4:00 pm  | Emporia State     | Home     |
| 10/6/11                   | 4:00 pm  | Truman            | Home     |
| 10/8/11                   | 6:00 pm  | Washburn          | Away     |
| 10/13/11                  | 7:00 pm  | MO Western        | Away     |
| 10/15/11                  | 11:00 am | Fort Hays St.     | Home     |
| 10/20/11                  | 7:00 pm  | Central MO        | Away     |
| 10/22/11                  | Noon     | Lindenwood        | Home     |
| 10/27/11                  | 6:00 pm  | MO Southern       | Away     |
| 10/29/11                  | Noon     | Southwest Baptist | Away     |
| 11/3-6/11                 | TBA      | MIAA Tournament   | TBA      |

| NORTHWEST MEN'S AND WOMEN'S TENNIS SCHEDULE |         |                 |          |
|---|---------|-----------------|----------|
| DATE  | TIME    | OPPONENT        | LOCATION |
| 9/9-10/11                                   | 8:00 am | Washburn Invit. | Away     |
| 9/16-17/11                                  | 4:00 pm | Truman Tourn.   | Away (W) |
| 9/23-24/11                                  | 4:00 pm | Truman Tourn.   | Away (M) |
| 9/30/11                                     | 8:00 am | ITA             | Away     |
| 10/1-2/11                                   | 8:00 am | ITA             | Away     |
| 10/21/11                                    | TBA     | Alumni Match    | Home     |

| NORTHWEST MEN'S AND WOMEN'S CROSS COUNTRY SCHEDULE |         |                     |          |
|--|---------|---------------------|----------|
| DATE   | TIME    | OPPONENT            | LOCATION |
| 9/9/11   | 6:00 pm | NW Bearcat Open     | Home     |
| 9/17/11  | TBA     | Woody Greeno Invnt. | Away     |
| 9/30/11  | TBA     | Emporia St. Invnt.  | Away     |
| 10/8/11  | TBA     | DII Challenge       | Away     |
| 10/22/11   | TBA     | MIAA Championships  | Away     |
| 11/5/11  | TBA     | NCAA S.C. Regionals | Away     |
| 11/19/11   | TBA     | NCAA Championships  | Away     |



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NWMISSOURIAN





Senior outside hitter, Alex Hanna, lofts a shot over two defenders in the 'Cats scrimmage on Sunday, Aug. 21. The Black team took the best of five series 3-1.

SETH COOK | INWMISSOURIAN

## Rinehart, team look to build on last season

By Tony Botts

Co-Managing Editor

Head coach Jessica Rinehart and the Bearcat volleyball squad have no intentions of hanging their hat on last year's historic season.

A year after making the program's first ever NCAA tournament and knocking off the No. 2 ranked Washburn Ichabods in front of a packed home crowd in Maryville, Rinehart is ready to set the bar higher.

"Our expectations are that we're going to make a push to be in that upper echelon of the conference," Rinehart said. "We're also expecting to make a return trip to the NCAA tournament."

"Last year we set the bar high and everyone is motivated and on the same mission to continue to raise the bar in the program. We've worked really hard in the spring and the summer and that's showed in the first couple of weeks in the preseason."

Rinehart enters her second season with the Bearcats with a new assistant coach, former Northwest volleyball player Amy Phelps, and two seniors, outside hitter Alex Hanna and setter Laura Aiken.

"Those are two of our cornerstones...they're the most experienced court players we have," Rinehart said. "Laura is, I think, one of the best setters in the conference...Alex is one of the top outsides and she's got a cannon so she intimidates teams."

Hanna, an All-MIAA honorable mention a season ago, will provide the offensive firepower at the net for the 'Cats. Her 339 kills last season was third-best in the conference.

Aiken returns as the team's assist leader with 1,097 assists and a third-team All-MIAA performer last season.

Not relying on last season's accolades, the players and

Rinehart bought into an offseason program. Both the players and coach are encouraged from the results.

"Our spring season was really big for us," Aiken said. "We did a lot of lifting. We saw a lot of improvement as far as numbers just in the weight room. Physical testing was huge."

For Aiken, the end of the season holds the answer to whether the squad's offseason program amounts to postseason success.

"One of our main goals is to earn our spot in the tournament," Aiken said. "Obviously, we want to go to the postseason tournament again, but we don't want to have to sit in a conference room and wait with our fingers crossed. We want to know when the games are over, by our record and the way we played, we want to be able to go, 'Yeah, we're going,' and to start planning on it."

From year-to-year, all programs experience the loss of an invaluable senior class. This year, Rinehart looks to the incoming freshmen class to reload the talent pool.

"They're quality players...we're expecting them to contribute right away," Rinehart said. "They fit into our system seamlessly and we're excited about what they're going to be able to do this year."

The 'Cats open their season Sept. 2 at the Nebraska-Omaha Volleyball Showcase in Omaha, Neb.

Their first conference match is Sept. 14 at Emporia State and Northwest opens at home Sept. 20 against the Washburn Ichabods.

"I think we have some expectations as far as what we're capable," Aiken said. "And we're looking at the freshmen to take that one with us. We've got players that have been there, been to that level and we're ready to take it there again."





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